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133 as it were, to an illumined dew upon the surface of the land.

361 341 On the road to Tiflis you pass Mtzkheta, clustered on a tongue of land at the junction of the Aragvi with the Kura. The decrepit balconies of the little tumbling houses are placed on piles above the river and they seem to scramble for a foothold. Forlornly above the village roofs, rise the rugged proportions of the Metropolitan Cathedral of the Georgian kings. Within are marvellous frescoes, chipped and fading badly; but you may still discern—more intriguing than the formal postures of long-forgotten Georgian kings and queens —a curious map of Georgia, of some centuries old, which displays in varied colours the mountains of Caucasus with strange beasts thereon, the rivers Rioni and Kura with cities set about, castles and gigantic trees, and riding in the Euxine two galleys surrounded by monsters of the deep. A coffer of blue stone in the nave of the Cathedral once held the seamless shirt of Christ. The custodian of this royal neglected shrine was a young brown-bearded monk of Khevsureti, with the sallow skin and meek lustreless blue eyes of an undernourished fanatic; and he listlessly lamented the oblivion of God. But for this monk the place was all deserted, and in the courtyard, some drunken picnickers, lolling in the untidy grass, conveyed a piquantly Hogarthian touch. While the sun was sinking I could yet descry upon a neighbouring mountain the ruins of a temple where they say that Armazi was worshipped with fire and human flesh. By the gates a charabanc was waiting for our picnickers, and across the squalid street were festooned scarlet streamers, with the likeness of Karl Marx in black and white, and the hackneyed message calling upon the Proletariat of All Countries to Unite. 000 Two thousand years of history flickered in the evening light.

And thinking on this scene, and on that Georgian land, and on the passing there of history, I now recall to mind the saying of that learned Moor, of ibn-Khaldun the Tunisian in his Muqaddima or Prolegomena. "Know thou", said he,

> "that the true purpose of history is to make us acquainted with human society, that is with the civilization of the world, and with its natural phenomena, such as savage life, the softening of manners, attachment to the family and the tribe, the various kinds of superiority which one people gains over another, the kingdoms and diverse dynasties which arise in this way, the different trades and laborious occupations to which men devote themselves in order to earn their livelihood, the

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Osseti, in the Mtkvari valley and in Armenia, the principal seats of culture during the Bronze Age, particularly in Colchis, have remained unexplored.[1]

The animal style—variations of which are characteristic of the Bronze Age, not only in the Ægean and in Iran, but also over the Russian plains—was developed in the Caucasus to a state of high technical value; and the mind which seems to interpret itself in this style—the free and lustful ingenuous pagan mind—is the mind of the Caucasians in the pages of Xenophon and Strabo. In the Caucasian Bronze Age there also developed a fine geometrical style, in many respects original to the Caucasus, and with characteristics distinct from the geometrical style of Iran and Mesopotamia which reached its apogee in the early centuries of Islam. This geometrical style with the interlaced and vegetable designs, continued to be a motive of Georgian mediæval art, where it is combined with the Byzantine decorative motives in Georgian ecclesiastical architecture.

With the spread of Hellenic, later Roman, and later Byzantine power round the shores of the Black Sea, the art of the great Mediterranean cultures came to have a direct and overwhelming influence on Georgian art. Christian thought and Christian art came to the Georgians through the magnificent and engulfing channel of the East Christian Church.

The Armenians were original and inventive in architecture, and it has been suggested by Strzygowski and others that Armenian architecture—rooted in the traditions of the older cultures of Iran, Syria and Mesopotamia—itself had a fundamental influence on the development of East Christian art. Whatever may have been the interplay of Byzantine, Armenian and Anatolian influences in the evolution of East Christian architecture between the sixth and twelfth centuries, the Georgians themselves contributed little of originality to the development of East Christian—or of their own local—architecture. At the same time they created many fine interpretations of Byzantine and Armenian architectural conceptions; and it is probable that the Georgians themselves had a definite influence on the spread of Byzantine, and more particularly of Armenian artistic ideas to the Russian principalities.[2]

The Caucasus is celebrated for its rug-weaving. The most beautiful rugs come from the Muslim parts of Caucasus—from Daghestan, Shirvan and Karabagh and from the

[1] See Chaps. II and V.

[2] Cf. Dalton, *East Christian Art*, p. 56.

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346 531 closely to the decoration of Tbeti and Gelati. This columnar decoration is, of course, essentially Byzantine, but the Cathedral has, nevertheless, its distinct Georgian identity and its characteristic Georgian details, as, for instance, the altar-niche and the interlaced ornamentations.

The great days of Georgian church-building came to an end in the thirteenth century. After the period of the Mongol and Timurid wars, the architectural history of the country is chiefly notable for the ambitious reconstructions of Mtzkheta and Sioni by the Kartlian kings. The ancient churches of Abkhazeti fell into ruins and stand half-buried in the forest, and Mongols and Osmanli wrecked the shrines of Samtzkhé. Only here and there where a rich feudatory had achieved independence and a temporary prosperity did a new foundation rise beside the humbler church of the domain. Thus in the middle of the fifteenth century the Atabegi Manuchar raised the fine Church of Safar over against Akhaltzikhé, seven thousand feet above the sea. An Armenian architect seems to have built for him, and his craftsmen achieved some exquisite stone-carving and some of the best surviving mural frescoes of the Caucasus. About the middle of the sixteenth century the kings of Kakheti embellished and reconstructed Alaverdi as the Metropolitan See of their precarious kingdom; and the Eristavni of the Aragvi raised the large brick pile of Ananuri—with its elaborate and grotesque carvings of trees, and serpents biting their tails, chained lions and hares. But the kings of Georgia were in extremity and the fount of East Christian art—Byzantium—was choked for ever. No trickle of the influence of Renaissance architecture came through into the closed Pontine lands, and the Baroque, spreading with the commercing of the French and the Italians, penetrated into Anatolia only far enough to be remembered in the bastard mosque of Yuzgad.

● 341 531 177 Separated from the Georgian districts of Lechkhumi and Radsha by passes which are only accessible to the traveller from the last half of June to the end of August, Svaneti, in language, in customs and in art, has always been distinguished from the more open parts of Georgia. The tall and slender stone towers, resembling in character the round towers of Ireland, are an individual feature of Svanian architecture and their origin has never been satisfactorily explained. These towers indeed, together with the ancient interlaced design, and in combination with certain physical, psychological and linguistic affinities, have suggested an intangible and mys-

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terious connection between the Iber-ni of the Black Sea and the Hiberni of the Atlantic island—a remote connection which will probably never be scientifically explained, but which nevertheless exists. The geographical isolation of Svaneti preserved always a conservatism in both linguistic and cultural processes, and here remnants of things most anciently Georgian survive. The ecclesiastical architecture of Svaneti affords an example of this cultural conservatism.

In Svaneti, the *basilica* form of church survived and was developed centuries after the *centralized* and *cruciform* types had become common in Georgia and throughout the East Christian world. The poverty of Svaneti may serve to explain the *basilica* type. The low arched vault employed in the construction of the *basilica* is more simple and easy to build than the *cupola* with its *drum*. Countess Uvarov argues against this explanation on the ground that the frescoes covering the interiors of the Svanian churches and the wealth of icons and sacerdotal plate found therein, the carved doors and iconostases and wrought gates, contradict the assumption of poverty in Svaneti during the great days of the Bagratid Kingdom. But the fact that the frescoes are of later date than the buildings themselves and that they were mostly painted during the days of the Imerian King Giorgi II (1548–85) and his Queen, Tamara Diasamidze, and of their son Alexander, and of King Bagrat IV and his Queen Tamara (1662–80), indicates that Svaneti was specially favoured by royalty during the harryings of Imereti by the Turks, while it is an established fact that much of the wealth in the churches was carried there during troubled times to save it from the sack of the richer churches and monasteries in the south.

The explanation of the striking difference between Georgian and Svanian architecture seems to lie in the poverty and natural conservatism of Svaneti and in the fact that while the *basilicas* of Georgia were destroyed during the Arab wars and later replaced by the newer *centralized* and *cruciform* types, the ancient *basilicas* of Svaneti remained untouched, while the shrines might be repaired but seldom rebuilt.

Again, it is possible that the *basilica* form in Svaneti developed from those pagan sanctuaries *Khati*, *Nishi*, *Mairemi*, in which the inhabitants of the mountains first began to learn to sing praises to the Christian God. The Church of Nuzala in Osseti and a multitude of small chapels scattered all along

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439 Shooes and in a word in all things most necessary for Man's use. There were all sorts of Grocery and Pothecary's Ware, Spices, Perfumes, Drugs and all manner of Oyntments. So that the vessel seemed to be a little Town, where everything was to be had." [1]

[436] Almost all the foreign trade was transacted by barter, and both Chardin and Pitton de Tournefort found that the people preferred to be paid for goods in stuffs and trinkets rather than in currency.

197 The long period of perpetual contact, both commercial and political, with their powerful Mussulman neighbours had a profound effect on the peoples of the Caucasus. The more highly civilized Georgians and Armenians, strong in the antique traditions of East Christian culture, were outwardly affected in modes and habits and some ways of thought; the peoples of the mountains, who had not by the fifteenth century emerged from the tribal state, forgot their thin Christianity and became Muslim in culture as well as in outward fashion. Not only did Islam penetrate the remoter valleys of Circassia, but it became the religion of the relatively civilized Meskhians and Abkhaz.[2]

[771] The easy religious casuistry of the Georgian princes was natural to them as well as convenient to their political interests. In the seventeenth century the old mediæval culture of Christendom, which had flourished in the Kingdom of Georgia, was half-forgotten, and it was only the more sensitive spirits who were prepared still to make sacrifices in the [341] memory of its tradition. The new architecture of Tiflis, in the Mukhranian days, was altogether in the Muslim style; 562 dress, manners, furnishing, were Persian. The position of women was also affected and Chardin noted a tendency, since the Persian rule began in Tiflis, towards the seclusion of women. They went veiled in the streets, while in the country districts, where there were no Mussulmans, they still adhered to the Christian custom.[3]

181 The travellers of the seventeenth century are none too generous in their appraisal of the Georgian character. Chardin has a long diatribe on the Georgians, and he condemns their immorality, their drunkenness, their knavery and their arrogance. But even he admits, by contrary, that "*they are Civil and Courteous and more than that, they are Grave and Moderate*".[4]

[1] Chardin, p. 75.
[2] For the progress of Islam in Samtzkhé during the seventeenth century, see Wakhushti, *Histoire de Samtzkhé*, in Brosset, *H. de la G.*, II, i, 232–3.
[3] Chardin, p. 226.
[4] *Idem.*, p. 191.

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ne s'ouvrent pas une fois en dix ans. Je n'ai jamais pu découvrir le motif de cette extravagance. . . . Je crois, pour moi, qu'ils les édifient en des lieux inaccessibles pour éviter de les orner et de les entretenir."

In their buildings the Georgians closely followed the architectural principles of the Byzantines and the Persians. The ruins of three very fine early examples (Ouplos, Darbasse and Vardzia)[1] still exist, and in the seventeenth century we have accounts of some great palaces built precisely like those of Persia. The houses of the lesser gentry were rough, two-storied, timber barns, roofed with clay or wooden tiles, frequently burnt down during the incessant civil wars, and easily rebuilt. The large living-room usually accommodated a number of domestic animals. "Les maisons," to quote Chardin, "sont fort incommodes et fort sales; elles n'ont ni cheminées ni fenêtres, le feu s'y fait au milieu, le jour y entre par la porte." The peasants lived more miserably still. Their huts were for the most part troglodytic, and all that was to be seen of them by a traveller riding past were the rough roofings of timber and earth, on which vegetables were flourishing and where the women lazed in the evening. A distinctive feature of Georgian houses of the better class were wide balconies, running the length of the building and furnished with divans, where the master and his guests would eat and drink and lounge away the afternoon and, during the hot season, sleep. Castles, consisting of a keep or donjon, surrounded by stables and other buildings, the whole protected by a wall and ditch, were scattered about the country, and formed the strongholds and treasuries, but infrequently the residences, of the princes. They afforded a refuge to the countryside in time of war.

The towns of Georgia were insignificant, wretched collections of mud-and-timber houses, built so close together that "il est souvent plus facile de cheminer sur les toits que par les rues." Tiflis, the stronghold of Persian political influence, and hence the centre of Transcaucasian politics, alone might claim to be a city. As the chief market-town of the Kur Valley, it brought farmers and merchants from all over the Caucasus, to buy and sell wine and silk and wool and cotton, horses and cattle and arms, while its famous mineral springs attracted wealthy invalids from Tabriz and Isfahan. Its bazaars and caravanserais, "bâtis de pierres et bien entretenus," were always crowded and busy—"on y voit autant de sortes d'étrangers

[1] Situated respectively near Gori, Kutais and Akhaltsikh.